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Exploring the Relationship between Spiritual Well-being and Psychological Well-being among Novice Clergy and Senior Priests in Myanmar: A Basis of Development and Implementation of a Psycho-Spiritual Intervention Program

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Abstract

The study explored the in-depth experiences of spiritual well-being and its role on psychological well-being among clergy towards development and implementation of a Psycho-Spiritual Intervention Program. In particular, the study looked into the lived-experiences of spiritual well-being through the quality of relationship that one has within each component of spiritual well-being and its role on psychological well-being among novice clergy and senior priests because novice clergy and senior priests are the most important stages in priestly life. There is a big difference between these two groups in terms of number of years in priestly life, year of ordination, age and occupation. In order to achieve breadth and depth in the understanding of this phenomenon, the researcher employed the explanatory sequential mixed-method design. A total of 271 clergy (135 novice clergy and 136 senior priests) completed questionnaires about spiritual well-being and psychological well-being, 10 novice clergy and 10 senior priests were then selected for in-depth interviews. The results of regression analyses showed that overall spiritual well-being is a significant predictor of psychological well-being among the clergy. Personal component of spiritual well-being alone and environmental component of spiritual well-being alone were significant predictors of psychological well-being among novice clergy and senior priests respectively. The interviews substantiated these results. It further revealed that transcendental and communal component of spiritual well-being still appear in the picture of the relationship between spiritual well-being and psychological well-being among the clergy. These components, however, were manifested in different ways among the novice clergy and the senior priests. The findings specifically showed that the experience of spiritual well-being within the personal component benefits personal growth, environmental control, self-acceptance, purpose in life and emotional stability among the novice clergy. The experience of spiritual well-being in environmental component, on the other hand, benefits peace of mind, self-acceptance and others-acceptance, increased ability of problem-solving skills, increased happiness and a better physical health among senior priests. The implications of the study for clergy, for counseling practice and for future research have discussed.

Keywords: Spiritual well-being; Psychological well-being; Clergy; Novice; Psycho-Spiritual Intervention Program

1. Introduction

The concept of well-being has broadened in contemporary discussions to include not just physical and mental health but also spiritual dimensions, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of psychological well-being. This encompasses practices such as self-reflection, meditation, and prayer, and extends to finding meaning and connecting with the transcendent, which is crucial for many religious individuals seeking fulfillment (Noronha & Barganza, 2021; Corwin, 2014; Mudge, 2021). Spirituality, defined as the non-material essence of existence, incorporates beliefs about critical life aspects and a higher power, offering purpose, meaning, and value that foster inner peace and harmony with the environment (Cemile, 2020; Peter, 2016). Spiritual well-being, emerging from efforts to link spirituality with overall

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health, reflects the quality of relationships with oneself, others, the environment, and the transcendent. It's posited that spiritual well-being, much like intellectual capacity measured by IQ tests, is evident through these relationships, serving as a key indicator of spiritual health (Dadfar et al., 2016; Shirzad et al., 2020). Research supports that spiritual well-being not only enhances psychological function and stress management but also positively affects life satisfaction, particularly beneficial for those with illnesses (Moons, 2019; Zarrin, 2016; Roger, 2018). Furthermore, studies suggest that while all domains of spiritual well-being contribute to happiness, the personal and communal domains are particularly significant, though effects can vary by group and situation (Keizer, 2022; Shirzad et al., 2020). In religious groups, elements like self-esteem and community belonging are crucial, highlighting the role of supportive relationships in boosting well-being (Boateng, 2022). These findings underscore spiritual well-being as a vital, complex factor in achieving comprehensive happiness.

Ley's (2022) research highlights how prayer practices enhance happiness in religious individuals by significantly boosting their spiritual health, demonstrating the interconnectedness of spiritual well-being aspects such as self-worth, emotional positivity, social connections, and divine relationships. Mudge (2021) builds on this by pinpointing specific drivers of happiness in clergy, like prayer and community engagement, which vary with their career stages, with novice clergy focusing on community integration and senior clergy on life satisfaction and community involvement. The demanding roles of clergy often lead to stress, burnout, and mental health issues, necessitating proactive measures like realistic goal-setting, self-care, and professional support to maintain their well-being. Spiritual well-being, as defined by the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging and supported by Crisp (2022), Cool (2021), and Boateng (2022), is described as a dynamic state reflecting an individual's relationships with God, self, community, and the environment, underpinning overall health and contentment. Prominent models like NICA's, Ellison's, and Fisher's elaborate on these relationships across personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental domains, illustrating the need to evaluate spiritual alongside physical, mental, and emotional health for a holistic approach to the well-being of religious leaders.

Fisher's model posits that spiritual well-being is a dynamic state reflected through one's relationships across four domains: Personal, Communal, Environmental, and Transcendental. Each domain contributes to an individual's spiritual health, and these domains are interconnected rather than isolated, suggesting that enhancing relationships within these domains can collectively boost spiritual well-being. This model has significantly influenced the development of tools for assessing spiritual well-being and has garnered considerable empirical support, marking it as one of the most comprehensive frameworks in this field. The personal domain centers on the relationship with oneself. Torgeson (2021) highlights that individuals who are at peace with themselves typically exhibit strong spiritual health. This domain emphasizes self-awareness and the journey towards self-improvement, crucial for achieving internal peace and a deeper sense of personal identity and value. The communal domain involves one's interactions with others. According to Pate (2022), robust interpersonal relationships are essential for emotional and spiritual well-being. These relationships, characterized by love, trust, and mutual respect, enrich one's self-awareness and foster significant social support. Sooy (2021) notes the importance of social support systems including family, friends, and community, which provide emotional, material, and spiritual assistance, essential for nurturing one's faith and spiritual life. In the environmental domain, spiritual well-being extends to one's relationship with nature. Nichols (2022) discusses how interactions with the natural world can enhance spiritual well-being, fostering feelings of oneness and harmony. This connection to nature is not only about appreciating the environment but also about understanding how these interactions contribute to personal and communal spiritual growth. Finally, the transcendental domain deals with one's relationship with a higher power or God. Kyle (2020) outlines specific conditions for a fulfilling spiritual connection, such as viewing God as a source of comfort and a stable base during challenges. This domain emphasizes the importance of feeling a deep sense of belonging and attachment to a transcendent figure, enhancing spiritual well-being by providing a spiritual refuge and foundation for overcoming life's obstacles. Fisher's model comprehensively illustrates that spiritual well-being is multifaceted, involving various aspects of human relationships and interactions. It underscores the importance of nurturing these relationships to enhance one's spiritual health, thereby contributing to overall well-being.

Torgeson (2021) highlights psychological well-being as more than mere happiness, involving eudaimonic aspects like virtue, competence, and meaningful personal development. Ryff's (1989) model further expands this by defining six facets essential for a well-rounded psychological state, including self-acceptance, positive relations, and purpose in life. This multidimensional approach reflects the idea that true well-being encompasses more than hedonic enjoyment, emphasizing growth and fulfillment (McNeal, 2020). Cultural influences significantly shape these perceptions of happiness, with variations noted between Eastern and Western contexts. For instance, Eastern happiness, deeply embedded in community and spiritual practices, contrasts with the Western focus on individual achievements and self-esteem. Nweyen (2018) and Arreola (2022) both describe how in places like Myanmar, cultural and religious teachings from Buddhism to Confucianism impact notions of well-being, promoting a life of peace and communal harmony. This

cultural backdrop extends to understanding happiness among different professions, such as clergy, where fulfilment derives not from personal gain but through spiritual and communal service (Nweyen, 2018). These insights align with broader research linking spiritual well-being to psychological health, where spirituality often correlates with reduced mental health issues and enhances overall life satisfaction (Hargrove-Scott, 2020; Ramazan, 2021). The interplay between spiritual and psychological well-being is particularly pronounced in settings where community and religious practices are integral to daily life. Studies show that spiritual well-being not only supports personal happiness but also bolsters communal bonds and fosters resilience against stress and adversity (Ramazan et al., 2021; Rajabi et al., 2023). This synthesis of spiritual and psychological dimensions underscores a holistic approach to health that embraces both individual and collective well-being, reflecting a complex interdependence shaped by cultural and spiritual values.

Research underscores the positive correlation between the four pillars of spiritual well-being—personal, communal, environmental, and transcendent—and psychological well-being, though detailed studies remain limited (Mudge, 2021). Nichols (2022) notes that internal harmony and self-esteem, key facets of the personal domain, significantly enhance happiness and contentment. Katsantonis (2020) highlights how quality relationships within the communal domain improve psychological health through mechanisms such as forgiveness, thereby reducing distress and boosting joy. However, McDowell (2022) and Lian (2018) point out that while perceived social support is crucial, especially in crises, its effects can vary, sometimes exacerbating stress due to perceived obligations or threats to autonomy. In terms of environmental well-being, Cetin & Kokalan (2021) and Jain et al. (2019) demonstrate a robust connection between nature engagement and psychological health, suggesting that immersion in natural settings boosts emotional and cognitive well-being. The transcendent aspect, as discussed by Bradshaw and Kent (2018), shows that a secure attachment to God aligns with positive mental health outcomes such as greater life satisfaction and reduced anxiety. This finding is reinforced by Omreore et al. (2022) and Rahi (2022), who observe that strong spiritual commitments and viewing God as a secure attachment figure contribute to higher happiness and improved mental health. Conversely, Arabaci and Soysal (2021) find that an unstable attachment to God may result in feelings of alienation and decreased psychological well-being. The interplay between spiritual well-being's components and psychological health presents a complex but generally positive relationship, affecting everything from personal growth and emotional stability to social integration and resilience. This complexity highlights the multifaceted nature of spirituality and its significant impact on mental health, indicating that each component distinctly contributes to an individual's overall well-being.

Religious communities often function as spiritual families, where rituals like daily prayers and masses cultivate deep social bonds and a shared spiritual existence (Ritchie, 2019). For religious individuals, this community life not only nurtures personal spiritual growth but also strengthens interpersonal relationships and resilience. Shultz (2018) observes that shared religious practices and values fortify connections within the community and with the divine, providing crucial support in times of crisis. These relationships, central to spiritual well-being, foster acts of kindness, forgiveness, and justice, thereby enhancing personal contentment and a sense of purpose (Sanders, 2019). Fisher's model of spiritual well-being underscores how communal well-being enhances personal well-being, significantly influencing overall spiritual health, a connection particularly vital in religious settings where life is deeply intertwined with divinity. In Myanmar, the clergy, while adhering to traditional values amidst modern pressures, face the challenge of balancing educational and community responsibilities with their spiritual values, a balancing act pivotal for their spiritual development and for imparting life skills and spiritual values to the community (Nweyen, 2018). Furthermore, enhanced spiritual and psychological well-being among religious individuals arises from their profound connections with themselves, others, God, and the environment, impacting their self-esteem and respect for others, thereby promoting psychological well-being (Rhyu & Baek, 2023). Community support is crucial, fostering caring behaviors and strong communal ties that enhance individual and collective resilience (Soriano & Kathyrine, 2021). Goodwin and Kraft (2022) emphasize the importance of self-love in these settings, influencing interpersonal relationships and overall community health. Developmental theories like Erikson's psychological stages and Super's career development stages provide insight into the progression from novice to senior clergy, highlighting how life stages influence their spiritual and professional growth. Novice clergy focus on identity and integration within the community, whereas senior priests aim to contribute meaningfully to the next generation and manage the transition from career establishment to maintenance, seeking fulfilment and effectiveness in their roles as guided by Canon Law, no. 646. This developmental understanding is essential for fostering their happiness and effectiveness in religious and community life.

Spirituality is fundamental to human experience, acting as a core element that unites the entire person and is pivotal in enhancing overall well-being and guiding psychotherapy practices. Spiritual well-being, which fosters connections with oneself, others, the environment, and the transcendent, is acknowledged as crucial for mental and physical health. This well-being is structured around four interconnected domains—personal, communal, transcendental, and environmental—that collectively shape one's spiritual health. Fisher's model, a leading framework in psychology, underscores the importance of these harmonious relationships as markers of spiritual state. Research indicates that

spiritual well-being profoundly affects psychological health, particularly in collectivist cultures where the quality of interpersonal and divine connections is closely linked to happiness and mental stability. For religious individuals, maintaining spiritual well-being is essential, not merely beneficial, influencing their happiness and resilience against life's challenges. Nonetheless, there is a noticeable research gap in how each spiritual dimension specifically impacts psychological well-being within religious groups, such as Myanmar's clergy. This underscores an urgent need for further studies to dissect how these spiritual aspects individually and cumulatively influence psychological well-being across different clerical stages, from novices to senior priests. Such insights could deepen our understanding of spirituality's critical role in bolstering life satisfaction and emotional stability among those deeply engaged in religious practices.

The conceptual framework for this study explores the relationship between spiritual well-being and psychological well-being, specifically within the context of Myanmar clergy, including both novice clergy and senior priests. Previous research has indicated that spiritual well-being significantly predicts psychological well-being, yet there is a lack of depth in understanding how each component of spiritual well-being—personal, communal, transcendental, and environmental—individually affects psychological well-being among different groups. This gap in the literature suggests that while the overall quality of spiritual relationships influences psychological health, the specific contributions of each component are not fully understood, especially among religious professionals at different stages of their careers. This study aims to delve into the nuanced experiences of spiritual well-being among novice and senior clergy, hypothesizing that differences in psychological, career, and vocational development stages between these groups may affect how they perceive and benefit from their spiritual experiences. It is further hypothesized that while personal and communal components of spiritual well-being are significant predictors of psychological well-being, the transcendental and environmental components may also play crucial roles under certain conditions, such as within the dedicated clergy population. Ryff's (1989) multidimensional model of psychological well-being, which aligns closely with the constructs of happiness relevant to clergy, provides a theoretical basis for this analysis. The study seeks to determine which components of spiritual well-being are the strongest predictors of psychological health among novice and senior priests and to understand the potential differences in how these components influence the two groups. This research could uncover important insights into the spiritual dimensions that most significantly impact the psychological well-being of clergy, guiding future interventions and support mechanisms tailored to their specific developmental stages and needs.

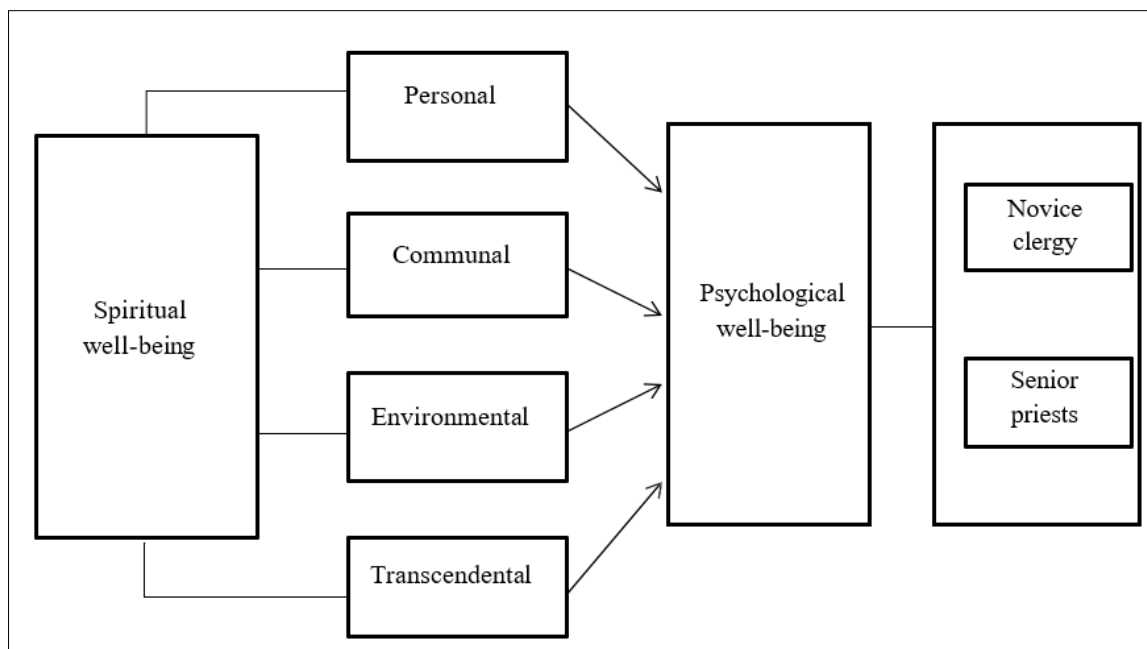


Figure 1 Relationship Between Spiritual Well-being and Psychological Well-being

This study investigated the interrelationship between spiritual well-being and psychological well-being among clergy, particularly focusing on how different components—personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental—impact psychological health across different stages of clergy careers, specifically novice and senior priests. Employing a mixed-method approach, the research assessed both spiritual and psychological well-being, and involved the development and testing of a Psycho-Spiritual intervention program tailored to clergy identified with low spiritual well-being. This program, influenced by insights from various experts, aimed to foster resilience, self-care, and stress relief among

participants. Key findings from this research are expected to enhance the support systems for clergy, providing valuable insights for counselors, psychologists, and other professionals working with religious populations. As the first of its kind in Myanmar, this study contributes significantly to the limited empirical research in the region on spiritual health, particularly examining its correlation with happiness. By exploring the real-life spiritual experiences of clergy, the study deepens understanding of the nuances of spiritual well-being and its profound impact on psychological health and overall happiness. This could influence broader perspectives on the role of spirituality in enhancing life satisfaction among religious communities. Moreover, as a catholic priest and counselor, the researcher leveraged his background to deeply explore the spiritual and psychological landscapes of clergy. The novel Mindfulness-based Psycho-Spiritual Intervention Program designed as part of this study emphasized self-reflection and spiritual growth through techniques like guided meditation and journaling, aiming to improve mental health, self-esteem, and quality of life among clergy. This research not only enriches the academic dialogue around spirituality and well-being but also provides a practical framework for future interventions to bolster spiritual and psychological health in religious settings. The study, while providing valuable insights into the impact of spiritual well-being on psychological health among clergy, recognizes several limitations. Primarily, the research was narrowed to explore only spiritual well-being as a predictive factor, omitting other potential influences on the psychological well-being of clergy. Additionally, due to the cross-sectional design of the study, establishing causality between spiritual well-being and psychological outcomes was not feasible. The research also did not extensively examine how each of the four components of spiritual well-being individually affects various core dimensions of psychological well-being. Moreover, the scope of the study was limited to male clergy, as female religious figures were not included in the participant group. These limitations suggest areas for future research to build upon and extend the findings of this study.

2. Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between spiritual well-being and psychological well-being among clergy. This method involved collecting and analyzing data to identify patterns and quantify the extent to which spiritual well-being can predict psychological well-being in this specific population. Utilizing tools like regression analysis and correlation coefficients, the study quantitatively assessed how different components of spiritual well-being—such as personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental aspects—impact the psychological health of clergy members. This approach effectively isolated the influence of spiritual well-being from other potential variables, providing a clear picture of its role in enhancing psychological wellness among religious leaders. The findings are expected to contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge, highlighting key areas for intervention and further research to support the mental health of clergy in various religious contexts.

The research was conducted under the ethical oversight of the UST Graduate School Ethical Review Committee, with necessary permissions and informed consent obtained from participants, ensuring confidentiality and respect throughout the study. The study spanned eight Catholic dioceses in Myanmar, notable for their significant clergy populations. It employed purposive sampling to include 271 priests, focusing on novice clergy aged 20 to 30 and senior priests aged 40 to 65, based on their ordination stages and experience, to examine the variance in spiritual and psychological well-being. The quantitative approach was central to the study, utilizing a descriptive comparative and pretest-posttest design. This method facilitated the statistical analysis of spiritual and psychological well-being among the clergy, capturing baseline and post-intervention data to assess the effectiveness of a newly developed Psycho-Spiritual Intervention Program tailored for clergy. The primary aim was to enhance their coping strategies and deepen their understanding of life's purpose, thereby fostering improved well-being and a more meaningful existence. Research instruments included the Spiritual Health and Life-orientation Measure (SHALOM) and the Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS), adapted for cultural relevance and clarity. These instruments quantitatively measured the quality of relationships across spiritual well-being's four dimensions—personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental—and psychological well-being's six core domains. Data collection involved structured questionnaires distributed through formal communications with diocesan ordinaries, followed by email dissemination to the priests in charge, achieving a high response rate. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 20, applying Pearson's correlation and regression analysis to explore the relationships between spiritual well-being and psychological outcomes. The findings are expected to contribute significantly to the literature on spiritual and psychological well-being among clergy, providing empirical support for interventions designed to enhance these aspects of clergy life. This research underscores the importance of addressing both spiritual and psychological dimensions to support the well-being of clergy, potentially informing future therapeutic practices and spiritual interventions within religious communities.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Spiritual Well-being

The descriptive statistics of the spiritual well-being of clergy, measured using the SHALOM scale, showed that both novice and senior priests reported high levels of spiritual well-being. Specifically, the overall mean scores for spiritual well-being were 76.59 (SD = 10.17) for novice clergy and 76.76 (SD = 10.74) for senior priests, both scores significantly above the midpoint of 50. Detailed mean scores for the components of spiritual well-being were similarly high across both groups. For novice clergy, the mean scores were 20.67 (SD = 3.01) for the transcendental component, 19.48 (SD = 2.94) for the personal component, 18.61 (SD = 2.86) for the communal component, and 17.82 (SD = 3.21) for the environmental component. For senior priests, the means were 20.62 (SD = 3.21) for transcendental, 19.42 (SD = 2.88) for personal, 18.61 (SD = 2.85) for communal, and 18.10 (SD = 3.48) for environmental components. The frequency and percentage results further highlighted that a significant proportion of both novice clergy (40.7%) and senior priests (43.4%) reported high overall spiritual well-being, and the majority in both groups (92.6% of novice clergy and 94.9% of senior priests) enjoyed above-average spiritual well-being. Similar high percentages were noted across the specific components of spiritual well-being, with both groups showing strong scores in personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental aspects. These findings suggest a robust level of spiritual well-being among the clergy, indicating that spiritual health is well maintained among this group. However, no significant differences were found between novice clergy and senior priests regarding their levels of spiritual well-being or its specific components, suggesting a uniformity in spiritual experiences across different stages of clerical life.

3.2. Psychological Well-being

The psychological well-being of clergy, as measured using Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS), indicated that both novice clergy and senior priests consistently reported high levels of psychological well-being. The quantitative results showed that the average scores for both groups were significantly above the midpoint threshold, with novice clergy averaging a score of 170.16 and senior priests slightly higher at 170.96, both well above the midpoint of 126. These scores demonstrate that clergy perceive themselves as functioning effectively in psychological terms. Further analysis of the six subscales of the Ryff scale—autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance—revealed that both novice and senior clergy scored above the midpoint of 21 for each subscale. This suggests strong levels of autonomy, effective management of their environments, continuous personal growth, healthy relationships, a clear sense of purpose, and high self-acceptance among the clergy. Specifically, novice clergy scored highest on personal growth and positive relations, indicating a focus on self-improvement and strong social bonds. In contrast, senior priests exhibited higher scores in environmental mastery, highlighting their capability to control and optimize their living conditions. These results underscore a significant level of psychological well-being across both novice and senior clergy, characterized by robust personal development, effective environmental management, and positive interpersonal relationships. This comprehensive view of the clergy's psychological health suggests they possess the resilience and adaptability necessary for their demanding roles.

The correlation analysis across the combined group of clergy, novice clergy group, and senior priests' group strongly suggests that spiritual well-being is significantly associated with psychological well-being among clergy. This pattern is evident in the strong correlations between the components of spiritual well-being (personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental) and psychological well-being. For the combined group, the highest correlation was between the personal component of spiritual well-being and psychological well-being ($r = .305, p < .001$), indicating that personal spiritual health is a critical factor influencing psychological states. This is corroborated by even stronger correlations in the specific groups: novice clergy showed a correlation of .399 and senior priests .223 for the same variables, highlighting that personal spirituality is particularly significant for newer clergy. The communal component, while still significant, showed weaker correlations with psychological well-being across all groups. This suggests that while social spiritual activities and community engagement contribute to psychological well-being, they might not be as influential as personal spiritual practices. Environmental and transcendental components also demonstrated significant positive correlations with psychological well-being. Notably, environmental mastery was more strongly correlated in the senior priests' group ($r = .355$), suggesting that as clergy mature, their ability to manage their surroundings becomes a more significant factor in their psychological health.

The global spiritual well-being, representing an overall measure of spiritual health, showed a consistent positive relationship with psychological well-being across all groups, albeit with moderate correlation values. This supports the notion that a holistic spiritual state is beneficial to mental health, though individual components may have varying levels of impact. These results underscore the importance of a well-rounded spiritual life, incorporating personal growth, community engagement, mastery over one's environment, and a transcendental connection, in maintaining and

enhancing psychological well-being among clergy. This comprehensive approach to spiritual well-being not only supports individual well-being but also enhances the capability of clergy to fulfill their roles effectively, impacting their personal satisfaction and ability to minister to others. The findings suggest that interventions aimed at improving spiritual well-being should consider multiple facets of spirituality, tailored to the specific needs and stages of a clergy member's life and career. The testing of the five assumptions of regression analysis, namely normality, multi-collinearity, linearity, independent errors, and homoscedasticity (Field, 2005), was also included in the pre-work. The results were satisfactory.

3.3. The Impact of Spiritual Well-being on Psychological Well-being Among Clergy

The study examines the effect of spiritual well-being on the psychological well-being of clergy members, focusing specifically on clergy in Myanmar. The analysis indicates that spiritual well-being significantly influences psychological health, accounting for 9.8% of the variability in psychological well-being among clergy. This impact is slightly different among various clergy groups, with novice clergy showing a 10% variability explained by spiritual well-being, and senior priests showing 9.7% variability. The study's quantitative results confirm the pivotal role of spiritual well-being in fostering psychological health among clergy. It highlights the positive correlation, suggesting that higher levels of spiritual well-being correspond to better psychological health. This relationship underscores the importance of supporting the spiritual health of clergy to foster their psychological well-being. The similar percentages in both novice and senior clergy suggest that the effect of spiritual well-being on psychological health remains relatively consistent regardless of the duration of service or age. Further analysis revealed that the impact of spiritual well-being components varies between novice and senior clergy. For novice clergy, the personal component, which includes self-awareness and inner peace, significantly predicts psychological health, accounting for 16% of the variability. Conversely, for senior priests, the environmental component, reflecting their relationship with the surroundings, is more influential, explaining 12.6% of the variability in their psychological health. Given that spiritual well-being does not account for all the variability in psychological health, it would also be prudent for future research to explore other potential factors, such as social support systems, work-life balance, and personal coping strategies, which might contribute to the psychological well-being of clergy. The data highlight the intertwined nature of spirituality and psychological health in the clerical profession, pointing to the need for a holistic approach in clergy support programs that consider both spiritual and psychological components. Using Fisher's (1998) model of spiritual well-being, the study quantitatively assessed the quality of relationships within the components of spiritual well-being—personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental—and their impact on psychological health. The analysis distinguished between the impacts of spiritual well-being on novice and senior priests, highlighting differences in how spiritual dimensions influence their psychological states. This differentiation underscores the need for tailored spiritual support strategies that address specific needs based on clerical seniority and experience. These findings suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing spiritual well-being could be beneficial for improving the psychological health of clergy. Such interventions could include structured spiritual counseling, retreats, or spiritual exercises tailored to different stages of clerical life. The quantitative findings from this study emphasize the significant influence of spiritual well-being on the psychological well-being of clergy in Myanmar, suggesting that enhancing spiritual health could substantially benefit their overall well-being and effectiveness in their roles.

3.4. Influence of Individual Components of Spiritual Well-being on Psychological Well-being Among Clergy

The study utilized stepwise regression to determine the impact of different components of spiritual well-being on the psychological well-being of clergy. The analysis revealed that among the various components of spiritual well-being, the personal and environmental components emerged as significant predictors. Specifically, the personal component of spiritual well-being was found to be the most influential, explaining 9.3% of the variability in psychological well-being. This indicates a strong relationship where improvements in the personal aspect of spiritual well-being, which involves individuals' feelings of purpose and self-realization, significantly enhance their psychological health. This finding aligns with psychological theories that emphasize the importance of self-concept and purpose in life as foundational for mental health. When combined with the environmental component, which includes the interaction with and perception of one's physical and social environments, these two factors together accounted for 10.8% of the variability in psychological well-being. The inclusion of the environmental component suggests that clergy's interaction with their environment further influences their psychological state, albeit to a lesser extent than personal spiritual well-being. The regression coefficients indicated that for every unit increase in the personal component of spiritual well-being, there is a .210 increase in psychological well-being, and for every unit increase in the environmental component, there is a .155 increase. This data highlights the personal component as the stronger predictor of psychological health compared to the environmental component, though both are significant. These results underscore the multifaceted nature of spiritual well-being and its differential impact on psychological health. It suggests that interventions aimed at enhancing clergy's spiritual well-being should particularly focus on nurturing personal spiritual growth and improving their interaction

with their environment. This dual focus can potentially lead to more robust improvements in their overall psychological well-being. Given the significant role these components play, future research might explore more deeply how other aspects of spiritual well-being, such as communal and transcendental components, contribute to psychological health, especially considering their potential to provide additional insights into holistic clergy care.

3.5. Differential Impact of Spiritual Well-being on Psychological Well-being Between Novice Clergy and Senior Priests

This study sought to uncover whether the relationship between spiritual well-being and psychological well-being varied between novice clergy and senior priests using stepwise linear regression analysis. The findings reveal distinct differences in the predictive power of various components of spiritual well-being on the psychological well-being of these two groups. For novice clergy, the personal component of spiritual well-being emerged as the primary predictor, accounting for 16% of the variability in their psychological well-being. This indicates that personal spiritual achievements, such as personal growth and self-realization, are crucial in enhancing the psychological health of novice clergy. This group possibly values personal spiritual experiences and introspection, which contribute significantly to their overall mental health. Conversely, for senior priests, it was the environmental component of spiritual well-being that held more sway, explaining 12.6% of the variability in their psychological well-being. This suggests that senior priests place a higher value on their interaction with and management of their external spiritual environment. Their longer tenure may provide them with greater opportunities and responsibilities to engage with the community and their surroundings in a way that profoundly influences their psychological state. The distinct influences of these components reflect the different stages of life and career these groups are in. Novice clergy are likely still in the process of self-discovery and defining their personal spiritual paths. In contrast, senior priests, with their extensive experience, might focus more on how their spiritual practices influence and are integrated into their broader environment. Furthermore, the study's findings emphasize the need for tailored spiritual development programs that consider the specific needs of different clergy groups. For novice clergy, programs that enhance personal spiritual exploration could be beneficial, while for senior priests, initiatives that strengthen their engagement with their environment could be more effective. The study highlights the complex interplay between different facets of spiritual well-being and psychological health, suggesting that the impact of spirituality on mental health is not one-size-fits-all but varies with individual experiences and life stages. This nuanced understanding can help in designing more effective pastoral care and mental health support tailored to the unique needs of clergy at different stages of their ministry.

3.6. Correlations Between Spiritual Well-Being Components and Psychological Well-Being Among Clergy

The correlations established between spiritual well-being and psychological well-being of the clergy underscore a significant linkage, aligning with prior research affirming this positive relationship. Specifically, the overall spiritual well-being shows a substantial correlation with psychological well-being ($r = .313, p < .001$), reinforcing the concept that a higher spiritual well-being generally enhances mental health among clergy. Diving deeper into the components of spiritual well-being—personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental—each shows a positive and statistically significant correlation with psychological well-being, though the strengths of these relationships vary. The personal component ($r = .305, p < .01$) stands out among the novice clergy as the most potent predictor, suggesting that personal spiritual achievements and internal peace play a crucial role in their psychological health. In contrast, the environmental component ($r = .284, p < .01$) is more pronounced among senior priests, indicating that their interaction with and management of their surroundings significantly influence their mental well-being. This differentiation likely stems from the distinct roles and experiences between novice and senior clergy. Novice clergy, being at the beginning of their spiritual careers, might find personal spiritual development and individual achievements more influential to their psychological state. Conversely, senior priests, with established roles within their communities, might derive more psychological stability from environmental factors such as community engagement and environmental mastery. The findings also resonate with existing literature which suggests that elements closely related to the personal component of spiritual well-being, such as self-esteem and self-worth, are crucial for the psychological well-being of priests. Studies like that by Tri (2014) highlight that high self-esteem helps clergy effectively cope with life's challenges, fostering a willingness to embrace change, which in turn enhances their psychological resilience and overall happiness. Similarly, communal support and a peaceful community environment have been identified as vital for the psychological well-being of clergy, reinforcing the importance of the communal component of spiritual well-being. These support networks provide encouragement, appreciation, and a sense of belonging, all of which are essential for maintaining mental health. Moreover, the transcendental component, involving a deeper connection or attachment to God, also correlates positively with psychological well-being, suggesting that spiritual relationships extend beyond interpersonal interactions to include one's relationship with the divine. This aspect can provide a profound sense of fulfillment and purpose, which is critical for mental health. Lastly, the positive correlation between the environmental component and psychological well-being among senior priests suggests that a harmonious relationship with one's environment can

significantly contribute to mental health. This might include feeling connected with nature and finding alignment with one's surroundings, which can enhance feelings of happiness and fulfillment. These results emphasize the multifaceted nature of spiritual well-being and its diverse impacts on psychological health across different stages of clerical life, highlighting the need for tailored spiritual care approaches that consider these varying influences.

3.7. Influence of Spiritual Well-Being on Psychological Well-Being Among Clergy

The comprehensive quantitative analysis consolidates findings that spiritual well-being significantly influences the psychological well-being of clergy in Myanmar, accounting for 9.8% of the variability. This effect is consistent across both novice clergy and senior priests, with spiritual well-being explaining 10% and 9.7% of the variability in their psychological well-being respectively. These results highlight the foundational role of spiritual well-being in enhancing mental health among clergy, suggesting that spiritual health acts as a protective factor against stress and contributes to a psychologically healthy life. The relationship between spiritual well-being and psychological health is pivotal; clergy who report higher spiritual well-being typically experience better psychological outcomes. This is consistent with existing literature which links spiritual fulfillment to overall life satisfaction and mental health stability. The research confirms that spirituality, involving personal peace, harmony, and a sense of purpose, significantly contributes to the mental resilience and coping capacities of clergy. The influence of specific components of spiritual well-being on psychological health was highlighted in the analysis. The personal component, which relates to self-satisfaction and internal peace, is particularly influential, explaining 9.3% of the variability on its own. Furthermore, when combined with the environmental component, this influence increases, underlining the importance of inner harmony and a personal sense of purpose in enhancing psychological well-being. Comparatively, for senior priests, the environmental component—which emphasizes harmony with one's surroundings and nature—plays a more significant role, enhancing psychological well-being by .155 for each unit increase. This indicates that clergy who feel connected to and in tune with their environment experience better psychological well-being. These findings underscore the need for supportive environments that foster both personal spiritual growth and environmental harmony to aid in the psychological well-being of clergy. The insights are pivotal for understanding how spiritual well-being interacts with psychological states among clergy in Myanmar. They suggest that tailored interventions aimed at enhancing spiritual well-being could significantly benefit the mental health of clergy, potentially leading to more effective ministry and personal fulfillment. The nuanced understanding of how spiritual well-being components vary in their impact based on the stage of clerical career suggests a need for tailored spiritual support that considers both personal and environmental aspects of spiritual life, especially as they relate to psychological health. This variability underscores the importance of designing interventions that address specific needs based on clerical seniority and experience, ensuring that each clergy member receives the most beneficial and appropriate support.

4. Conclusions

The present study found that spiritual well-being significantly impacts psychological well-being among clergy. As a result, it is significant to look into spiritual well-being when conceptualizing the priests' psychological well-being. However, the results of the study showed that spiritual well-being explained for only 9.8 % in variability of psychological well-being among the priests. This finding proved that other factors may account for psychological well-being among the priests respectively. That is why the present study cannot conclude that spiritual well-being is a significant determinant predictor of psychological well-being among clergy. In terms of the relationship between the components of spiritual well-being on psychological well-being among the clergy, personal component of spiritual well-being is a significant factor of psychological well-being among novice clergy and it accounted for only 16% in variability of their psychological well-being. Environmental component of spiritual well-being is a significant factor of psychological well-being among senior priests and it accounted for only 10.8 % of their psychological well-being. The findings suggest that the quality of relationship with self and with the natural environment significantly impact psychological well-being among these two groups. However, it is not strong enough to conclude that these components of spiritual well-being are determinant predictors of their psychological well-being. Relationship with God and with others enhanced the quality of relationship with self among novice clergy while these relationships are increased by connecting with natural environment which in return bring them closer to natural environment as well. These findings showed that there are interrelations among the components of spiritual well-being when one component of spiritual well-being is developed, the other components of spiritual well-being are increased as well. Furthermore, the dynamic state of each component of spiritual well-being differs across stages of life. The differences between the novice clergy and senior priests in terms of how they experienced psychological well-being revealed that the aspects of psychological well-being namely personal growth and purpose in life are the main concerns for the novice clergy. However, these aspects of psychological well-being have been declined and no longer present in the case of senior priests in terms of how they experienced psychological well-being. However, the present study is limited in proving the factors really accounted for this difference among the two groups.

Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that spiritual well-being contributes only modestly to the psychological well-being of clergy, accounting for 9.8% of the variability, which suggests that other factors also play significant roles. For novice clergy, the personal component of spiritual well-being explained 16% of the variability in their psychological well-being, while for senior priests, the environmental component accounted for 12.6%. These results highlight the need for further research to explore how other components, such as the transcendental and communal aspects, impact psychological well-being. Additionally, the study suggests interrelationships among the components of spiritual well-being, with enhancements in one aspect potentially boosting others, especially across different life stages. Future research should also examine the distinct experiences of psychological well-being between novice and senior clergy to better understand the factors influencing these differences. In terms of counseling interventions, it's recommended that spiritual elements be considered alongside other factors when addressing the issues faced by clergy. Enhancing the quality of relationships within the four components of spiritual well-being could significantly improve their overall spiritual health. Counselors and psychologists should familiarize themselves with the factors that distinguish the experiences of novice and senior clergy groups regarding psychological well-being. The study has also led to the development of the Mindfulness-based Psycho-Spiritual Intervention Program (MiPSIP), proven effective and reliable for clergy in Myanmar, aiming to enhance their spiritual well-being and, consequently, their psychological health. This program is particularly pertinent as the concept of spiritual well-being is relatively new to clergy in Myanmar, offering them tools to better understand and improve their spiritual and psychological states.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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